Noll Horan Earns MMR 326

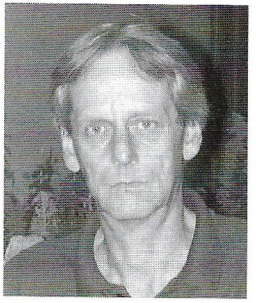
Like many of us, Noll Horan was first exposed to trains and model railroading through the influence of Joshua Lionel Cowen. A Lionel train set, bought by his father at Christmas 1949, planted the seed.

Since those early years, trains, especially steam, have fascinated him. Noll grew up in the Shenandoah Valley in Strasburg, Va., on the Southern Railroad. He lived a block from the depot and still has faint memories of Southern steam, both freight and passenger, shutting down traffic as the trains rumbled through town.

At age eight they moved to a place situated between the Shenandoah River and the Southern. He could fish and watch trains at the same time. Life was good. It was then that he became interested in HO scale. He began his first layout, a simple loop with two sidings. He didn't mind that the engines didn't run all that well, as he was more interested in creating scenery and building structures and rolling stock from scratch. Then came Boy Scouts, high school sports and girls, which took up most of his time.

After moving to Northern Virginia Noll came across N-scale trains. This rekindled his interest in model railroading. N-scale offered lots of modeling in a small space. Back then N-scale locomotives had two speeds: none and Warp 9. But, again, he was still more interested in scenery and building from scratch.

For the next 20 years he was an off-and-on-again N scaler. He happened upon an Ntrak modular setup one weekend at a local shopping mall. After checking out a few of their other Ntrak setups, he decided to join Northern Virginia Ntrak. This turned out to be what he was really looking for in the hobby. He really got into NV Ntrak, eventually becoming the club's president. In 1999 the club was invited to participate in the Mid-Eastern Region fall convention in Hagerstown, Md. This was his first exposure to the NMRA and its Achievement Program. Though he didn't receive a Merit Award, he did manage to place first in modules. The following spring, during the MER convention he got seriously into the AP Program at the urging of Jim Kellow and Monroe Stewart. A strong proponent of the Achievement Program, he believes that other than the Standards and Practices, it is the one facet of the NMRA where everyone can and will benefit.



He joined the NMRA, Mid-Eastern Region and Potomac Division after that Hagerstown Convention. The experiences he had and friends made have been most rewarding. In January 2001, he was appointed to the MER Board of Directors and is currently serving his second term.

Recently, he switched scales going to On30. This allows him the freedom and flexibility to model what he now wants: a narrow-gauge, freelance, backwoods, rundown logging railroad. He is currently working on an On30 modular-style layout, the Ragg Mountain Lumber Company, a subsidiary of the Waterlick and Fort Valley Railway.

Noll's appreciation goes out to all those modelers, teachers and supporters who have been an inspiration over the years. These include Jim Kellow, who pushed him from the get-go, and Monroe Stewart. Noll would also like to thank Ray Bilodeau, Norm Garner, Roger Cason, the On30 Conspiracy Rail Barons (they know who they are), Bill and Mary Miller, Frank Pearsall, Chuck Hladik, 'Doc' Thatcher and many others. Finally, he especially wishes to thank his dad for the Christmas gift.

Noll holds AP Certificates in Master Builder-Cars, Master Builder-Motive Power, Master Builder-Scenery, Master Builder-Structures, Association Volunteer, Association Official, Author and Model Railroad Engineer-Civil.